

**DATE:** January 29, 2021

**AUTHOR:** John Donlevy, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** Friday Update

All, it is simply amazing how fast January went by.

First, an explanation of some key efforts and my management direction within the organization.

- **Capital Planning-** A core responsibility of the City is the provision and maintenance of infrastructure. Streets, sewer lines, wastewater processing, storm drains, traffic lights and right of way are key elements of what we do. How we maintain and improve these is a critical function and it is expensive. I have given direction to the engineering and financial management sections to begin the preparation of "capital budgets" for inclusion in the upcoming budgets to establish a means of tracking projects, reviewing funding and aiding the City Council and the community an opportunity to discuss and plan for our future. A key function of the fiscal management of a City is long range planning which includes a multi-year capital improvement program which allows the prioritization of projects and the incremental funding. Beyond critical services, capital planning and budgeting is one of the key things we do!
- **Systems-** We have established a key committee to review our technological systems to insure maximum efficiency and effectiveness in how we do business. Whether it is how we do our building permits or are able to analyze road conditions, there are applications which will simply allow us to be better and do more. We live in an age where data and information is available for us to maximize our resources and it is our job to take advantage of it. The age is now and we need to modernize.
- **Payroll-** As a public agency, we are governed by a myriad of laws and regulations which complicate some of our core business aspects, especially how we pay our employees. There are some areas we cannot be wrong in and need to reach for 100% in how we pay our employees is one of them.
- **Personnel Policies-** Following employment law is a foundational element for which you need to be current. It sets the expectations for the organization, establishes the standards and keeps the City from getting into trouble. Employment liability is HUGE and being policy based within a framework which is current and transparent is critical.
- **Contracts and Bidding-** In FY2020-21, we will spend almost \$28 million, of which \$15 million will be through contracts and projects with outside firms. By law, we are required to be competitive and transparent when we spend taxpayer dollars. Making sure we competitively bidding our projects, then efficiently managing them with documents which protect our interests is critical. As we put together current processes and procedures for how we buy and spend our money, we need to make sure we are current with how we do things.
- **Fiscal Review-** I have directed our financial management team to prepare to look at our fees and charges for the services we provide. By law, we are required to charge fees which reflect our actual cost. Fees which charge below cost are a huge subsidy of taxpayer funds. Making sure we fairly charge for what we provide is simply good government.

Now, some updates on each of our Departments.

- Auburn Fire has released its Annual Report for 2020. Look for an overview at the February 22, 2021 City Council Meeting.
- Fire is transitioning to new AED defibrillators to match up with the newer units used in the ambulances. The older units will be deployed into the Police vehicles for use.
- Lots going on at the Auburn Airport with improvements to the Pilots Lounge, a recent inspection by Caltrans and the review of leases within the Airport proper.
- Part of the Airport Master Plan includes the expansion of hanger development which is in the formative stages but beginning to move.
- Public Works Field Services is focusing on the removal of dead trees along Auburn Folsom Road and other key corridors. The main culprit killing the trees is the dreaded Bark Beetle!
- The Planning Division has their plate full with lots of projects moving through different phases of processing. A key project is responding to comments from the State Housing and Community Development Department regarding the Housing Element Update. A key comment refers to R4 zoning which is absent in the current zoning code but dates back to 1973. A simple comment which will require a lot of follow up and research.
- The Collins Annexation which is proceeding and has been approved by Placer County LAFCO is scheduled to hold a protest hearing on February 8 from a neighboring property owner.
- The close out for the Nevada Street Pedestrian and Roadway project is being submitted for final funding and accounting.
- The bid package for the Wastewater Treatment Facility Sludge Dewatering Project is reaching 100% construction drawings and will go to bid over a one month period.
- The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board will be conducting an inspection of the Wastewater Treatment Facility in the coming weeks.
- The City will be submitting our report of Waste Discharge to the Regional Board this week.
- An issue on the horizon for the wastewater operation will be the amount of salt in discharged water!
- Staff will be receiving the subdivision improvement plans for the Sunny Creek Subdivision.
- Green Acres (transitioning from Eisley's Nursery) is submitting revised plans for Phase I of their overall project.
- Engineering is reviewing the final requirements for 510 High Street regarding storm drainage and an allowance for the rehab and re-use of the building to commence.
- Key projects in Human Resources are the implementation of the new payroll system and the update of the City's 1993 Personnel Policies.
- The Auburn Police Chief's Advisory Committee held its first meeting last week with a very positive response from the new members.
- Auburn Police is working with Placer County on "Project Lifesaver" which helps families with mentally disabled members to avoid the walking away or becoming lost. This is a very successful regional program which includes tracking individuals.
- The City Attorney is working with Planning on compliance with the State's new housing density bonus regulations. Look for this to go before the Planning Commission then the City Council.

Finally, Auburn is the home to a culture of people unafraid to take on epic challenges, do the unthinkable and pay tribute in ways most people would only dream of. The "pioneer spirit" is alive in Auburn and permeates a swagger which makes us amongst the elite of the region.



Imagine being a new immigrant or a family living in a big city and deciding one day that you are going to pack up your family in a wagon and traverse the wilderness to the edge of a continent. The massive risk for questionable return seems unfathomable today. Kind of like saying, "I think I am going to run solo or ride my horse 100 miles across the Sierra". It's the pioneer spirit!

In 1846, an infamous group of pioneers stuck at Donner Lake and unable to escape due to weather and snow were forced to make incredible life decisions. On December 16, 1846 "The Forlorn Hope", a group of 17 individuals began an infamous 100 mile trek to Wheatland, CA to seek help in the rescue of their family and friends. Two of the party immediately turned back, while 15 persevered over what became 37 days of desperation to survive. The infamous trek of the "Donner Party" included incredible sacrifices, including cannibalism. In the end, only 7 of the 15 made it to Wheatland- 5 women and 2 men.

So how to pay tribute to "The Forlorn Hope"... retrace their journey! Imagine sitting in your living room and saying, "I think I want to retrace the treacherous path which resulted in the death of more than half of the participants and cannibalism". Where else except Auburn to you have people say, "yup, sign me up!"

On December 16, 2020, four individuals including Auburn's own Tim Twietmeyer, Jennifer Hemmen, Elke Reiner and Bob Crowley set out on a 5 day journey to retrace the same 100 mile route of "The Forlorn Hope" in tribute. They made their journey, camping in the same locations, carrying tribute cards of those in the group and honoring the individuals who made the journey. The modern group were successful.

Here is a link to the web page for this expedition. <https://www.forlornhope.org/> Simply incredible!

As a community and an organization, we need to embrace our pioneer spirit, measure risk and reward and do the epic!

Have a nice weekend!

John

John W. Donlevy, Jr., City Manager

City of Auburn

1225 Lincoln Way

Auburn, CA 95603

(530) 823-4211 Ext 192